Skill Development: Developmental Experiences

While education and training are important to skill development, it is also known that only 10 percent of adult learning happens in the classroom, from books, tapes, or online learning activities. This is often because learning in these formats is more passive. Most adult learning, a full 70 percent, happens by doing. Learning by doing can take place through on-the-job and leadership experiences.

Following are examples of on-the-job and leadership experiences that can help you develop a range of skills and competencies.

collapse all

On-the-Job Experience Examples

- Take on a challenging "stretch" assignment. Some examples:
  - Fill in for your supervisor or manager when they are on vacation
  - Manage a project from start to finish
  - Make a temporary lateral move to another part of the organization
  - Help launch a new business, initiative, or program
  - Help turn around a struggling project
  - Develop a new product or service
  - Teach a process or course to your team or others
  - Run a team meeting or briefing session
- Seek out critical feedback on how your performance might be improved, then implement a plan to improve your performance.
- Represent your group at a cross-functional meeting on campus or serve as a liaison between groups on campus.
- Offer to manage project budgets to develop financial and budgeting competencies.
- Benchmark other teams that are known for high-performance and/or strong accountability, and create a plan to help your team meet or exceed expectations.
- Solicit feedback from peers, direct reports, and key constituents regarding a project, departmental program or process that is under-performing. Propose several improvements.
- Serve as a back-up contact when your supervisor is not available.
- Take responsibility for writing or reporting on project deliverables.
- Review your project budget and make recommendations for:
  - Cutting costs
  - Financial strategies that can maximize quality and efficiency

Leadership Experience Examples

- Serve as a mentor to other colleagues, supervisees, or staff members or help to onboard new colleagues.
- Lead a project team/manage a group where team members are experts in areas that you are not.
- Lead a project that requires innovation.
- Lead a division- or campus-wide project or task force that will have campus policy implications.
- Assume a divisional liaison role with Central HR on processes for:
    - Outreach and recruitment
    - Managing people issues
- Chair a selection committee to fill a position.
- Speak at a meeting.
- Present at a conference.
- Run for a position in a professional association on or off campus.
- Take on a leadership role in a social, community, or volunteer organization.

These are just some examples of developmental experiences that can help you develop your skills. See additional examples of development experiences in this Experience Inventory handout (http://hr.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/Experience_Inventory.pdf) (PDF).

The unique experiences that can help you progress toward your career development goals will be created by you, in conjunction with your supervisor or manager. Learning how to communicate to your supervisor that you are open to and desire development experiences is important to getting the opportunity to develop your career skills.

Show openness by being receptive to new ideas and suggestions, by admitting to your need for improvement, and by actively seeking your direct supervisor/manager's feedback. Keep in mind that the end goal is your career development, not the coaching process itself. Even if it's difficult to hear constructive criticism in the short run, if it helps to create development experiences for you it will help your career development as a whole.

Read the steps below for details on how to manage a developmental experience.

10 Steps to More Effective Developmental Experiences

1. Take the initiative to look for ways that you can learn new skills through experiences that also help your supervisor/manager, team, unit, or department achieve its goals.
2. Set up meetings with your supervisor/manager to discuss your proposed development experiences and get buy-in for proceeding. Use the Questions to Ask Before, During, and After Planned Development Experiences handout (http://hr.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/Simple_Questions.pdf) (PDF) as a guide for discussions with your supervisor or manager.
3. Create a development plan with your supervisor/manager to track your progress.
4. As your development experience is progressing, update your plan to mark accomplishments and learning acquired.
5. Set up regular check-in meetings with your supervisor/manager.
6. Take time to review your development plan before meeting with your supervisor/manager for check-ins.

7. Send your supervisor/manager any major changes in advance before meeting.
8. Leave the meetings with an updated plan.
9. Review where your supervisor/manager can provide you the most help going forward.
10. Seek out feedback after a project's completion to discuss the positive, negative, and key lessons learned, as well as to begin developing a new development experience.

If you are a supervisor or manager, see Resources for Supervisors and Managers (http://hr.berkeley.edu/development/career-development/skill-development/resources-supervisors) for handouts to manage your own developmental experiences, as well as tips on communicating with your employees regarding their developmental experiences to ensure the best outcomes for both employees and managers.

Copyright © 2016 UC Regents; all rights reserved

Powered by Open Berkeley (http://open.berkeley.edu)

Privacy Statement (https://open.berkeley.edu/privacy-statement)

Back to Top